

From Pesantren to Parliament: The Political Landscape of Nahdlatul Ulama during Indonesia's New Order (1973-1998)

Ahmad Shihafun Ni'am¹, Miftahuddin²,

¹Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

² Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

1asniam11@gmail.com , 2miftahuddin@uny.ac.id ,

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Abstract This article aims to investigate the intertwining of NU and politics during the New Order era. The research was conducted using a qualitative method with a Historical Science approach. The results indicate that during the New Order period, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) played an important role in Indonesian politics. After breaking away from the Masyumi Party in 1952, NU established its own political party and won 45 seats in the 1955 General Election. Despite the collapse of the Old Order, NU remained active in politics during the New Order era. Idham Chalid, one of NU's leaders, served as Minister of People's Welfare (1967-1970) and Minister of Social Affairs (1970-1971) in the first New Order cabinet. However, the New Order government's party simplification policy in 1971 resulted in the fusion of several parties, including NU, into the United Development Party (PPP). Despite this, the NU maintained its influence through the PPP and continued to play a role in national politics. The NU's involvement in politics during the New Order era demonstrated the organization's adaptation to dynamic political change.

Keywords: Nahdlatul Ulama, New Order, Indonesian politics, Idham Chalid, United Development Party, party simplification, 1955 elections, New Order cabinet

Abstrak Artikel ini ditujukan guna menyelidiki kelindan NU dan politik selama masa Orde Baru. Penelitian dilaksanakan dengan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan Ilmu Sejarah. Adapun hasil penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa pada masa Orde Baru, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) memainkan peran penting dalam politik Indonesia. Setelah memisahkan diri dari Partai Masyumi pada tahun 1952, NU mendirikan partai politik sendiri dan berhasil meraih 45 kursi dalam Pemilu 1955. Meskipun Orde Lama runtuh, NU tetap aktif dalam politik selama era Orde Baru. Idham Chalid, salah satu tokoh NU, menjabat sebagai Menteri Kesejahteraan Rakyat (1967-1970) dan Menteri Sosial (1970-1971) dalam kabinet Orde Baru pertama. Namun, kebijakan penyederhanaan partai oleh pemerintah Orde Baru pada tahun 1971 mengakibatkan fusi beberapa partai, termasuk NU, ke dalam Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). Meskipun demikian, NU tetap mempertahankan pengaruhnya melalui PPP dan terus berperan dalam politik nasional. Keterlibatan NU dalam politik masa Orde Baru menunjukkan adaptasi organisasi ini dalam menghadapi perubahan politik yang dinamis.

Kata kunci: Nahdlatul Ulama, Orde Baru, politik Indonesia, Idham Chalid, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, penyederhanaan partai, Pemilu 1955, kabinet Orde Baru



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INTRODUCTION

Surabaya city became a historical witness to the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama, which was initiated on 31 January 1926 (or 16 Rajab 1334 H) by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, who at that time was accompanied by Muslim traditionalist intellectuals and a circle of merchants in East Java. The Nahdlatul Ulama flag soon flew high in many narratives of Islamic education and political history in Indonesia, in part thanks to the founding of Nahdlatutujjar in 1918, which marked the beginning of NU's long struggle as a social organization that accommodates traditionalist Muslims across various sectors. The existence of Nahdlatutujjar—then limited to an entity of a rural economic movement—soon led to the formation of Tasvirul Afkar, or the "portrait of thought" movement, in 1922, as a response to concerns over the lack of forums for discussing various religious issues at the time. Initially, Tasvirul Afkar was merely a simple discussion forum with exclusive access, especially for ulama; however, it soon attracted public attention—particularly among youth—followed by a more organized formalization. In 1924, Nahdlatul Watan was formed, oriented toward building political awareness among its cadres. These three organizations then indirectly influenced Nahdlatul Ulama's perspective in carrying out its organizational activities, namely: (1) people-oriented economic insight, (2) educational and socio-cultural insight, (3) national insight through political education (Ali: 2013).

The historical statement above underscores that from the start of its initiation, NU was indeed not intended to function as a vehicle for practical politics. As for NU's involvement in politics, there are at least three Nahdlatul Ulama paradigms that have been used. As stated by KH Sahal Mahfudh, NU has perspectives in politics that include: state politics, people's politics, and power politics. For Kyai Sahal, practical politics oriented solely toward power is the lowest level of political consciousness. He used this statement as a critique directed at NU politicians whom he considered to have deviated from the Khittah 1926. NU's presence was not originally intended to be an entity that executes power politics, but rather to accommodate community aspirations, including political matters. The paradigm built into NU's way of engaging in politics is grounded in its religious practice and ideals, which are consistently close to local realities. History records that NU's involvement in politics can be traced when NU showed enthusiasm for the initiation of Masyumi. While NU was unified with Masyumi, many NU figures were involved in legacy contests both internally and outside the party. NU's period as part of Masyumi ended with political conflict, and both returned to being independent entities. NU's activity in Indonesia's political scheme reached its culmination when NU stood as a political party in 1952 after its separation from Masyumi (Masmuni: 2017).

In its dynamics—which many activists of this organization regard as having stained the Khittah 1926, whose substance in its articles does not contain political aspects at all—NU's intertwining with politics is said to resemble that of a parent and child. In NU's political

substratum, two models are also used: a model with a “grassroots” approach with the people as its orientation, and a more macro-scale political model, namely state politics. Although the use of these two political models is viewed as a brilliant effort, NU is considered less able to determine its stance in navigating its political activities. One reason is the temptation of power politics coming both from the pressures of external political currents and from within the organization itself (Al-Hamidy: 2007).

During the New Order political stage, the hierarchy in the New Order political ecosystem can be described as a very steep pyramid, with its apex dominated entirely by a single office: the president. President Soeharto, who at that time had strong influence within the military, could freely legitimize his power. When the New Order was implemented, the bureaucracy became the president’s spearhead in dominating government, in the sense that the bureaucracy was the strongest actor in most policy-making. To facilitate and give greater leeway for the president to strengthen his influence, President Soeharto introduced a policy of political party fusion, merging the nine existing political parties into three parties recognized by the bureaucracy, namely: PDI (Indonesian Democratic Party), PPP (United Development Party), and Golkar (Functional Groups).

Three types of institutions monitored the relationship between the state and the people in Indonesia during the New Order period. First, the security apparatus from the Department of Defense and Security, including Kopkamtib (Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order), which was a permanent military-emergency instrument enabling authorities to arrest and detain anyone suspected of subversive activities for an unlimited period. Second, the legislative assembly, which functioned to provide a sense of participation to leaders of the old political parties and their masses, keeping them within the system and helping to legitimize it. At the same time, however, this assembly denied that they were the real force influencing the outcomes of important decisions. Third, corporatist and quasi-corporatist organizations and procedures linking the government with certain segments of the population, such as Kadin (Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and the Indonesian Ulema Council, which served as channels of communication between the state and particular societal groups (Liddle: 1985).

In the dynamics of its political involvement, Nahdlatul Ulama was once incorporated into the United Development Party (PPP) due to the political party fusion policy introduced by President Soeharto. PPP itself was a merger of four Islam-based political parties, initiated in 1973. PPP, together with PDI—which tended to be nationalist in orientation—acted as opposition to Golkar throughout the duration of the Soeharto legacy. With NU’s massive and accommodative presence within PPP, PPP was then able to gain 28% of the votes in the 1982 general election. PPP did experience internal factionalism, which affected PPP’s vote share in the 1987 election,

dropping to 16%, especially after Abdurrahman Wahid withdrew his organization's support from PPP. Then, in the 1997 election, of the total 89 parliamentary seats won by PPP, 44 were held by NU members, with most of the remainder held by Muslimin Indonesia.

PPP legislators pushed for reform during and after the November MPR session, threatening a walkout on controversial issues such as naming Soeharto in corruption investigations and limiting ABRI membership. PPP proposed reducing ABRI seats to 15. At present, there are two former PPP legislators in the cabinet, a shift from the past when Golkar dominated cabinet positions. Besides Minister of Food and Horticulture A. M. Saefuddin, Hamzah Haz is the State Minister for Investment and Chair of the Investment Coordinating Board. Coming from West Kalimantan and educated in economics at Tanjungpura University, Hamzah was elected as a DPR member as an NU member in 1971, later joined PPP, and rose to the position of Faction Chair in the 1992–97 period. Hamzah was elected Chair of PPP, defeating his rival Saefuddin in early December 1998 at a national congress that also restored the ka'bah (the shrine in Mecca) as the party symbol. His rise signaled NU's triumphant return to PPP leadership while intensifying rivalry with the Gus Dur/Matori camp in PKB. In 1996, as Chair of the PPP faction in the DPR, Hamzah asked Matori to vacate his seat because he signed a controversial petition criticizing the government and political parties (Zenzie: 1999).

METHOD

In preparing and formulating this article, the author **used** historical research methods and a descriptive method. The systematic details of the historical methodology applied in this writing were as follows:

First, heuristics, namely tracing and collecting sources. The sources the author used in the narrative-descriptive literature study for this work were those that correlated with the proposed/raised theme. The references the author used in compiling this article included: the book *Nahdlatul Ulama: Dari Politik Kekuasaan Sampai Pemikiran Keagamaan* by Sumanto Al Qurtubhy; *Komunikasi Politik Nahdlatul Ulama* by Asep Saeful Muhtadi; *NU Tulang Punggung Negara: Strategi NU Pasca-Khittah dalam Membangun Relasi Sosial, Politik, dan Keagamaan* by M. Mahbub; as well as several other books; newspaper documentation from *KOMPAS*, *Bali Post*, and *Berita Yuddha* that correlated with and intersected the topic under discussion; and several journal articles obtained through online access.

Second, verification: the collected sources were not used immediately without considering the quality of the facts and information contained in them; instead, they first underwent a process of checking and data selection.

Third, interpretation: a piece of writing could never be separated from the author's subjective background or interests. Therefore, this step was the stage of providing impressions

and giving scholarly-imaginative meaning to the sources used as references before they were developed into a narrative chain of facts about NU's intertwining with politics and how, through its political strategies, the face of the Nahdliyin emerged in the New Order cabinet and the list of New Order parliament members.

Fourth, historiography: this was the stage of presenting information that had been integrated and arranged chronologically and systematically so that it was expected to be beneficial for related fields of study.

Besides employing the historical method, the author also used a descriptive-analytic method in composing the work, because the presentation of information in this paper took the form of narrative explanations rather than numerical data and tables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tracing the Political Awareness of Nahdlatul Ulama

The initiation of Nahdlatul Ulama since 1926 appears to have taken a central position and won the hearts of santri communities, especially within traditional circles. The existence of Nahdlatul Ulama has proven able to stimulate not only religious awareness among Muslim traditionalists, but also awareness of social commitment amid complex value struggles in every collective aspect of social life. In its dynamics, Nahdlatul Ulama has become one of the largest organized mass-gathering forces not only on a regional Indonesian scale but also in the Islamic world. This non-governmental organization has thousands of pesantren supporting it, which have manifested as social and religious institutions as well as community institutions, playing a vital role for this traditional santri-based organization (Al Qurtuby: 2022).

After the Dutch left Indonesia, and in the following period Indonesia was soon occupied by Japanese forces—beginning a new era of colonization in March 1942—Nahdlatul Ulama faced many difficulties and complex problems. In these troubled times, many NU leaders were deprived of their freedom through Japanese efforts to weaken indigenous power by imprisoning influential figures en masse. KH Hasyim Asy'ari, NU's navigator at the time, experienced similar treatment. KH Mahfudh Shiddiq also had his freedom taken; both were accused of mobilizing mass power to ignite resistance against Japan. During the Japanese occupation up to the eve of independence, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) played a significant role. The formation of a new federation organization called Masyumi caused the dissolution of MIAI. The leadership of Masyumi fell to KH Hasyim Asy'ari, an influential NU figure. Through Masyumi, NU actively participated in socio-political activities to achieve Indonesian independence, cooperating with nationalists and other Islamic organizations. During the Japanese occupation, NU's main focus was fighting for the independence of religion, nation, and state. They continued to intensify resistance during the 1945–1949 revolution. NU realized the importance of maintaining the momentum of struggle

even after independence had been achieved, to ensure national defense remained strong and vigilant. History continued, and NU committed itself to continue supporting the development and defense of the state.

NU's political role has always been based on **ijtihad** in political fiqh. One form of political resistance against colonial government was issuing a fatwa prohibiting imitating the behavior of colonizers, based on the principle "*man tasyabbaha biqaumin fahuwa minhum*." This ijihad gave birth to an anti-colonial movement in clothing culture, prohibiting Nahdliyin from wearing sarongs as their cultural identity. More interestingly, NU's political manifesto reflected an attitude and impact significant for the survival of the Indonesian nation. The meaning of this santri struggle indicates that nationalism is the soul of the movement (Mustaqim: 2015).

Discussion of NU's political involvement explicitly emerged at the 13th Congress in Banten, which debated a proposal from the Indramayu branch. NU's political orientation became clearer with the formation of the Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI) on 21 September 1937, and its official joining of the al-Islam congress on 26 February 1938. NU's involvement in MIAI shifted its orientation, both religiously and politically. Most MIAI activities until the establishment of Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi) in 1943 focused more on religious agendas. However, approaching and during the Japanese occupation, the political atmosphere grew increasingly heated and could not ignore political issues. For example, MIAI issued a motion demanding Indonesia have a parliament, asserting that the parliament should be based on Islamic principles. Thus, NU demonstrated high political adaptability, seeking to maintain balance between religious and state interests in a dynamic political context. This stance enabled NU to remain relevant and influential in Indonesia's political arena.

NU's political involvement became clear with the formation of Masyumi, which later became a political party at the al-Islam Congress in Yogyakarta on 7–8 November 1945. Initially, NU strongly supported Masyumi, urging its members and the public to join. However, over time, problems emerged that led NU to leave Masyumi in 1952, specifically at the XIX Congress in Palembang. Differences in political interests among groups within Masyumi—especially regarding power distribution—became the main factor. In addition, the inability of Masyumi leaders to negotiate and compromise among members also played a role. Many NU members were pesantren graduates, while Western-educated graduates were fewer. This caused some non-NU circles to look down on pesantren graduates, ultimately creating disharmony between NU and Masyumi until NU decided to withdraw.

In 1952, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) decided to separate from Masyumi and establish an independent political party. This decision was taken after a series of NU disappointments with Masyumi, especially concerning power-sharing within the federation party's leadership structure. NU felt its aspirations and interests were not well accommodated in Masyumi, so it

chose to stand on its own as a separate political entity (Noer: 1987). NU's transformation into a political party in 1952 triggered various speculations and prejudices. Some accused NU of opportunism—seeking power—while others saw it as evidence of political flexibility. This flexibility was seen in NU's repeated joining of Bung Karno's government, shifting Masyumi's dominance, and becoming a loyal supporter of the Soekarno regime. NU's closeness to power often made it the main supporter of Soekarno in facing attacks from Islamic parties opposing him, especially Masyumi. When Soekarno's leadership was challenged by Islamic organizations and parties opposing him, NU again stepped forward to defend Bung Karno. Support for President Soekarno was affirmed at the Cipanas Ulama Conference in West Java in 1954, strengthening NU's position as a key supporter of the government. In this way, NU showed high political adaptability, striving to balance religious and state interests in a dynamic political context—allowing NU to remain relevant and influential in Indonesia's political contestation.

After the Tampaksiring meeting attended by Idham Chalid as NU's representative, NU was automatically integrated into Soekarno's political thinking and system. Although Soekarno assigned NU an important role in the Nasakom concept as Islam's representative, NU's role in other parties declined drastically. Allan A. Samson described that during the Guided Democracy era, Islamic political activity was dominated by the NU Party. Like other political parties, NU was forced to support Soekarno without criticism, hoping to protect its interests. At that time, the political arena involved only Soekarno, the Army, and the PKI. This one-sided political situation made party life difficult, including for NU. Opposing Guided Democracy could be seen as opposing the revolution and risked elimination from politics—while NU had already stated support for Guided Democracy. On the other hand, if NU remained silent, the PKI would run rampant; and if it participated, NU had to stand alongside the PKI, which differed sharply ideologically. In these conditions, NU decided to be flexible to survive. Survival offered hope, despite huge risks. KH Wahab Hasbullah, as Rois Aam NU, played a major role in maintaining NU's existence amid this difficult political climate. His life philosophy taught to followers was: "be like a fish that lives—though living in salty seawater, its flesh remains bland." NU's decision to endure under authoritarian Guided Democracy was not merely political calculation, but also based on religious conviction. Saifudin Zuhri explained a religious argument by taking one principle: "*mala yudraku kulluhu la yudraku ba'dahu*" (what cannot be achieved one hundred percent, do not abandon the remainder). A similar principle NU used regarding Nasakom was: "*dar'u al-mafasid muqaddamun 'ala jalb al-masalih*" (avoiding harm takes precedence over obtaining benefit) (Mahbub: 2023).

Tracking NU and the New Order Through a Political Lens

NU's loyalty to Soekarno grew stronger and continued even after power shifted from Soekarno to Soeharto on 11 March 1966. After this transfer, parts of the reshuffle in the MPR and DPR were entrusted to NU. At this point, NU played a key role in the gradual transfer of power,

because in a short time General Soeharto succeeded in crushing the G30S. NU also played an important role in Soeharto's constitutional takeover. In addition, NU supported Soeharto's political career through the reshuffle carried out by the DPR-GR and two resolutions that legitimized the transfer of power to Soeharto. The first was the Lubis resolution, where Nurdin Lubis proposed that Soekarno be removed from his post as president. The second was submitted by Djamaluddin Malik, a DPR-GR member from NU, requesting that the MPRS appoint General Soeharto as President of the Republic of Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the last election had been held in 1955, and since then tensions continued to rise. ABRI, which did not yet have a supporting party, kept delaying elections to prepare longer. On the other side, NU strongly wanted elections to be held soon because it believed its anti-communist stance would win national votes. In 1966, Ansor urged elections by 1967 at the latest, but the MPRS decided elections would only be held in July 1968. Since the New Order era, Suharto opened the door widely for foreign aid and investment from countries such as the United States and Japan. Foreign assistance continued to flow heavily, reaching 200 million dollars in 1967 and 500 million rupiah in 1969. This assistance even exceeded two billion after 1975. However, NU viewed this with deep concern—not only about the economic impacts of foreign aid, but also about foreign cultural influence seeping into Indonesian society. NU urged Soeharto to limit foreign investment and aid to protect national identity and local culture from unwanted outside influence.

In political terms, the New Order under Soeharto wanted fewer political parties. As a result, political parties were forcibly merged into two major parties, which shocked NU. NU, Parmusi, PSII, and Perti were merged into the United Development Party (PPP). Meanwhile, PNI, Pakindo, the Catholic Party, IPKI, and Murba were merged into the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). PPP was formed on 5 January 1973 with the aim of maintaining and building the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution toward a just and prosperous society blessed by Allah. At this point, NU began to feel striking injustice. Since the merging of Islamic parties and the loss of control over the Ministry of Religious Affairs, NU's position became increasingly marginalized. NU's involvement in the Old Order was also seen as one factor worsening the situation. Over time, traditionalist thinkers concluded that NU's declining role was caused by the organization's own lack of "political maturity."

Hasyim Lathif expressed the view that in the New Order era, ABRI became the only force with a clear and planned vision of governance. Approaching the 1980s, Indonesia was filled with sharp ideological debates and fundamental changes in Islamic institutions. One factor influencing this was the entry of ideologies from the Middle East that began circulating freely domestically. With the formation of PPP, relations between NU and Parmusi also became tense. In an increasingly complex political context, strategic positions were held by Mintaredja, a modernist

figure representing the voice of Muslim Indonesia. This situation created a new challenge for NU to find its position again amid rapid and turbulent change.

In 1975, NU took a bold step by holding a major conference inviting ulama to discuss new challenges faced by the organization. It was clear at that time that NU leaders were beginning to distance themselves from the mass organization and from PPP, creating a vacuum that encouraged regions to take initiative. In that atmosphere, the ulama agreed to intensify activities in the social sphere while adjusting to a new identity as a "jam'iyyah." This important momentum reached its peak on 4 February 1976, when the Lembaga Ma'arif was established in Yogyakarta as an independent educational institution. The institution invited NU schools to join under a foundation, creating a stronger and more integrated education network. With a spirit of collaboration and innovation, NU tried to rebuild its social and religious foundations amid rapid change.

At the 25th Congress in Surabaya, Kiai Wahab Hasbullah, as Rais Aam, called on activists to return to the spirit of the khittah 1926. This call came amid challenging circumstances, where many NU leaders were distancing themselves from the organization and PPP, creating a vacuum that pushed regions to act independently. Two main reasons drove rejection of political involvement. First, civil servants and businesspeople felt heavy pressure from the administration affecting their access to public-works tenders. Second, there was deep dissatisfaction over the neglect of social and educational duties that should have been NU's main focus. If left unchecked, this neglect risked making NU lose its roots and relevance in society.

This dissatisfaction was worsened by Idham Chalid's leadership, which tended to withhold important information from the public and failed to provide adequate support to regional branches pressured by the government—sometimes even resulting in those branches' collapse. The 27th Congress in Situbondo also became a crucial moment when the decision to return to the khittah 1926 was taken, signaling that NU would not engage in practical politics. On that occasion, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected Chairman of the Tanfidziyah, marking a new chapter in NU's journey (Feillard: 1997).

The 27th Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Congress in Situbondo presented a highly significant moment. At this meeting, participants agreed to return to the khittah 1926, meaning NU would avoid involvement in practical politics. This was a strategic move showing the organization's commitment to focus on its social and religious mission. One major highlight was the election of Abdurrahman Wahid—better known as Gus Dur—as Chairman of the Tanfidziyah of the NU Executive Board for the 1984–1989 period. Gus Dur's leadership brought a distinctive new color, with his unique approach to keeping the organization relevant within Indonesia's socio-political context. The kiai supported NU youth initiatives to return to the khittah 1926 because it also meant restoring the ulama's role to a more central position. In recent years, NU's involvement in

practical politics had caused some ulama to lose focus on their religious mission, trapped in unhealthy power competition. Gus Dur, with his progressive character and vision, committed to redirect NU toward a path more consistent with its religious and social values (Muhtadi: 2001).

Idham Chalid: A Nahdliyin Face in the New Order Parliament

Idham Chalid was born on 27 August 1921. He was a political figure and a Nahdliyin. He was a statesman and religious figure of the large Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama and one of the declarators as well as leaders of the United Development Party (PPP). He even once held the mandate as Chairman of the Tanfidziyah of Nahdlatul Ulama. Idham Chalid pursued his education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor and graduated in 1943 after obtaining an academic degree from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. Throughout his life, Idham was often entrusted to demonstrate his statecraft skills by holding important positions across several phases of presidential dynamics. During President Soekarno's era, he served as Deputy Prime Minister of Indonesia for the 1956–1959 period. After the Old Order fell and the stage of "reform democracy" unfolded, under President Soeharto's will he was appointed to accompany legislative activities in parliament. Idham was not only appointed as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, but also strengthened his political role by becoming the head of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia in overseeing the course of democratic legislation.

When exploring KH Idham Chalid's political thought, it becomes necessary to trace his life journey and political experience. Idham Chalid is a figure who left his mark through various important positions. In the Soekarno era, he served as Deputy Prime Minister. In the Soeharto era, he served as Minister of People's Welfare and Minister of Social Affairs. Not only that, Idham also led the DPR/MPR, showing his expertise in the legislative world. As a politician, Idham Chalid also played important roles in various political parties. He had been Chair of the Masyumi Party, founded and led the Nahdlatul Ulama Party, and became Chair of the United Development Party (PPP). These roles made him known as a tough politician capable of adapting and leading in various situations (Mandan: 2008).

Idham Chalid's outstanding career in organizations attracted the attention of the Masyumi Party. In 1950, he was appointed a member of the Provisional Parliament (DPRS) representing Masyumi. However, when NU separated from Masyumi, Idham chose to be active in NU. He played an important role in NU's internal consolidation, including becoming a member of PBNU's Political Advisory Council tasked with following political developments in the country, analyzing them, and giving advice to PBNU. This council was formed on 2–3 September 1951. In the early 1950s, Idham often accompanied Wahab Chasbullah, Rais Aam of PBNU, on routine "safaris" to NU branches. His closeness with Wahab is what made him last long as General Chair. Idham Chalid began his Jakarta career by being active in the Pemuda Ansor movement. In 1952, he became head

of PB Ma'arif, an organization affiliated with NU focusing on education. In the same year, he was appointed Secretary General of PBNU and two years later was elected Deputy Chair. During the 1955 election campaign, Idham held an important post as Chair of the Nahdlatul Ulama Election Committee (Lapunu). The 1955 election was NU's first test after leaving Masyumi in 1952 and establishing its own political party. As Lapunu Chair, Idham had major responsibilities in the political arena. His election as a DPR member in the 1955 election on an NU ticket was a logical consequence of his role and dedication (Bruinessen: 1994).

In Indonesia's first election, NU recorded brilliant achievements that surprised many—including NU itself. From only eight seats in parliament, NU leapt into the top three by winning 45 seats. Not stopping there, the President added two DPR members from NU, bringing NU's total to 47 seats. In the 1955 election, NU gathered 6,955,141 votes, or 18.4% of the total 37,785,299 votes. This success was supported by three main pillars: ulama, pesantren, and politicians, which played crucial roles in NU's achievement. Ali Haidar added that the themes and methods used in NU's campaign proved very effective. With increased parliamentary seats, NU's influence in cabinet formation became more dominant. In 1956, five ministers in the Ali Sastroamijoyo II Cabinet came from NU, including the Deputy Prime Minister post held by Idham Chalid. Fealy assessed that Idham Chalid's appointment as Deputy Prime Minister at age 35 without prior ministerial experience was an extraordinary achievement, reflecting NU's high hopes for Idham and the limited availability of other suitable candidates.

Idham's political career shone even brighter when he was elected General Chair of PBNU at the 21st NU Congress in Medan in December 1956, defeating Mohammad Dachlan, who had served since April 1953. His career development was impressive given that he was not Javanese and was a graduate of the Modern Islamic Boarding School Gontor in Ponorogo, which had no ties with NU and was often viewed as a backbone of Islamic modernism. Idham led NU for eight terms—nearly three decades—until he was asked to step down in 1982 by the kiai. His extensive external networks at the center of government brought him into state structures. A month after Soekarno announced the Decree, in August, Idham was appointed a member of the Provisional Supreme Advisory Council (DPAS), which provided advice to the President and Government and at that time was more influential than parliament. Van Bruinessen stated that Idham's appointment to DPAS was due to his closeness with Soekarno, like most other NU figures.

Idham Chalid was a loyal supporter of Soekarno's nationalist-populist ideological manifesto, Manipol Usdek. In 1960, he was appointed Deputy Chair of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS), with the main task of drafting the Broad Outlines of State Policy (GBHN). In 1966, Idham again served as Second Deputy Prime Minister in the reshuffled Dwikora Cabinet, although only for four months, this position being his last in the Old Order era. Although the Old Order fell, Idham's political career remained at its peak. He continued to be considered

important by the New Order government and twice served in the cabinet. In the first New Order cabinet, Idham was appointed Minister of People's Welfare from 1967 to 1970. Then he served as Minister of Social Affairs from 1970 to 1971. The first election in the New Order era was held in 1971, this election was the second and also the last for the Nahdlatul Ulama Party, because the New Order government issued a party simplification policy more extreme than Soekarno's. The policy was carried out through fusion or merging of several parties with ideological similarity. This was done by the New Order as part of its program to restructure political life. Idham, a central figure in Indonesian politics, reached the top of legislative power as Speaker of the DPR and MPR after the 1971 election. However, his career dimmed when he served as Chair of the DPA, a position more ceremonial than substantive.

CONCLUSION

Nahdlatul Ulama was founded on 31 January 1926 (or 16 Rajab 1334 H) by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, accompanied by Muslim traditionalist intellectuals and a circle of merchants in East Java. From the beginning, NU was not intended to function as a vehicle for practical politics. Regarding NU's political involvement, there are at least three paradigms used: state politics, people's politics, and power politics. In its dynamics, NU began its political entanglement when it showed support for Masyumi. However, in 1952, NU decided to leave Masyumi and become an independent party entity. In the 1955 election, NU won 45 seats, making it one of the three largest parties in parliament. When the political party fusion policy was implemented during the New Order, NU was merged into PPP together with three other Islamic organizational elements, positioning it as opposition to Golkar as the bureaucratic party. During the New Order, a Nahdliyin figure emerged in parliament: Idham Chalid. After the Old Order fell and "reform democracy" unfolded, under President Soeharto's will he was appointed to take part in legislative activities in parliament. Idham was not only appointed Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, but also solidified his political role by becoming head of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia in overseeing democratic legislation for the 1971–1977 term.

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